



Child Care Environment is Key to Healthy Children

Child care center staff and family child care providers across the country are being encouraged to join the *Let's Move! Child Care* campaign to raise a healthier generation of kids. *Let's Move! Child Care* was launched by First Lady Michelle Obama and has a website www.letsmove.gov that providers and parents can access for a plethora of information and resources to improve physical activity and healthy living. The *Let's Move! Child Care* site is www.healthykidshealthyfutures.org.

Let's Move! Child Care (LMCC) is a nationwide call-to-action that empowers early care and education (ECE) providers to make positive health changes in children that could last a lifetime. ECE providers who choose to participate in LMCC are recognized when they meet a set of best practices related to the five LMCC Goals—physical activity, screen time, food, beverages, and infant feeding. To help providers reach their goals, a number of online interactive tools—including a Checklist Quiz and action planning guide—have been developed through a public-private partnership between the White House, the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Association for Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, Nemours, and the University of North Carolina Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and other partners.

Some of the helpful topics for parents include ways to reduce screen time and get active, talking to your family about sitting less and moving more, creating screen-free bedrooms, and focusing on family time during meals. Suggestions for child care providers, centers, and school-age programs include ideas on being a role model to students for a healthy lifestyle, encouraging staff to consume healthy foods and beverages, updating worksite policies for teachers and staff including breastfeeding support, and implementing a variety of healthy eating and physical activities that emphasize health education, skill-building, and changes to the child care environment.

Child Care Aware (formerly NACCRRRA) is getting involved with *Let's Move* by hosting a variety of webinars found at <http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org/resources/webinars.html>. All of the webinars have been recorded and are available for center staff and providers at no charge. Topics include screen time, infant feeding / breastfeeding support, physical activity, and healthy eating research, policies, implementation, and best practices.

By taking an active role in initiatives such as *Let's Move*, children will set forth on a path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years. **ShapingNJ** - the state partnership for nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention is focused on promoting the same key concepts as *Let's Move! Child Care*. **ShapingNJ** recently funded training and support to child care centers participating in the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment in Child Care and has actively promoted updates to the *New Jersey Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers* to provide child care programs with guidelines that promote raising a healthier generation. LuAnn Wood, a **ShapingNJ** Committee member and vice president of Lakeview Child Care, which operates seven child care centers in central New Jersey, shared that "Lakeview has updated its policies to promote healthy children by setting high standards around nutrition, physical activity and screen time. The future habits of young children are established before they enter school. We take responsibility for helping children develop practices that will help them maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their future. We based our policies on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. They are compatible with the ideals of both *Let's Move! Child Care* and **ShapingNJ**."

This article was written and distributed by the Child Care Workgroup of ShapingNJ. Child care agencies and associations as well as other crosscutting workgroups are encouraged to cut and paste this article and use it in upcoming newsletters targeted to all those interested in evidence based child care in NJ.